Spring is in the air and blue bonnets are providing some scenery as we traverse Texas highways and byways. The winter semester is moving quickly. We have a lot going on in Soil and Crops Sciences. We welcome Dr. Matt Elmore to our unit in his new role as Turf Extension Specialist in Dallas. Our soils team placed 14th overall at Nationals in Pennsylvania. The turf quiz bowl team placed 7th out of 30 teams at the Sport Managers Turf Assn. meeting in Orlando. We are interviewing for a spatial soil and water science position at College Station and recruiting for a soil scientist at Lubbock. We wish Dr. Gary McCaulley the best in his retirement following his many years of service at our Eagle Lake facility. We recently held the Soil and Crop Sciences Awards Banquet and the Gamma Sigma Delta Initiation and Awards Reception where several of our students, faculty and staff were honored.

The administrative team met with AgriLife administration this semester to discuss positions, plans for moving the turf grass facilities, renovating our infrastructure, the metrics produced by the department this year, constraints and opportunities as we move forward. The department is to be congratulated for the publications, grant productivity and new cultivars. We need to be cognizant that student numbers are becoming a bigger part of funding decisions. We are also encouraged to move forward with development efforts. It was really good to be able to share how much our unit accomplishes and how productive you are as research faculty, teaching faculty and extension faculty. While much of potential improvement is dependent on the legislative session our vision for the future stimulated very solid discussion of next steps.

A special thanks to Dr. Smith, Dr. Miller, and Jim Lukeman and Ms. Judy Young for their help on getting the review material put together and especially to all the faculty and staff for participating. It is extremely important to have your participation in identifying impacts, outputs and accomplishments. These are used frequently as our administration meets with corporate, state, federal partners and especially with our stakeholders.

Thanks to Dr. Murray for a dynamic seminar series again this spring and a shout out to our plant breeding group for consistently packing the room at our
Friday discussions.

The annual review process is now in full swing. I have been able to complete trips to Amarillo, El Paso, Fort Stockton, Vernon, Lubbock and Corpus Christi. Thanks to all for working with Judy to facilitate the reviews in a timely manner. With both departments to complete reviews for it will be very hectic between now and the end of May. Faculty are also wrapping up staff reviews.

In early March I was able to serve as the A&M representative to NAUFRP Administrative Technical Representative meeting on the McIntire-Stennis funds. It was a great learning experience and provided significant insight into how they complement our Hatch and Smi-Lever funds.

Corporate relations activity is moving forward thanks in large part to the interaction with the department provided by Adam Helms. We will soon have a new addition in corporate relations from the department with the addition of Dianna Bagnall. We look forward to her full-time involvement as she completes her degree. Since the last newsletter we have had visits or planning sessions with: Bayer, BP, Scott’s, hose company?, Monsanto, ConAgra and others.

I have recently had the opportunity to participate in the 100th anniversary celebration of Norman Borlaug. This brought great visibility to A&M through his recognition with a statue in the Capitol (see story inside). I also lead a group of students on congressional visits in D.C. through my role as President of the Crop Science Society of America.

Dr. Ed Runge helped in the celebration of Dr. Borlaug’s birthday by attending the celebration in Obregon Mexico along with many of the Beachell Borlaug fellows. Thanks for all the arrangements to get this group to Mexico. Several of our faculty were there as well to celebrate and plan to continue the vision of reducing the loss of potential wheat yield to rust.

Congratulations to Jamie Foster recently elected as division chair C-6. A special thanks to all participating in the election process. Our next president will also be from Texas with the election of Dr. Mike Grusack, with the ARS. Soil Science Society of America and Agronomy Society of America elections will be confirmed by the next newsletter.
Sympathy

Please keep Glenda Kurten, an Administrative Coordinator in our office in your prayers. Her mother, Mrs. Elsie Christensen, passed away in March.

Please keep the family of Leo Witkowski in your thoughts and prayers. Leo was one of the oldest living graduates from the department at 100 years of age, and he made many lasting and valuable contributions to Soil and Crop Sciences and the profession of agriculture.

Please keep Linda Francis in your prayers on the passing of her father. Linda is an Administrative Secretary in our office.

In Memory of Former Students

Mr. David R. Goodale ’56
Greenville, SC
AGRO

Mr. Jeffrey C. Anderson ’78
Refugio, TX
AGRO

Welcome to the Department

We would like to welcome Matt Elmore to the department. Matt will be our new Assistant Professor and Extension Turfgrass Specialist at the Dallas AgriLife Center, starting in August.

“I am very pleased to have a highly qualified candidate such as Matt join our Extension group and the turfgrass team. He will be a great asset in our turfgrass research and Extension programs in North Texas and across the state,” Travis Miller said.
Dr. Clark Neely examines his canola variety trials out at the Extension farm.

Congratulations to all of our scholarship and awards winners at the 2014 Soil and Crop Sciences Awards Banquet!
Graduate student Morgan Metting transplants tomato plants for her herbicide research project.

Bluebonnets are in full bloom across campus! Happy spring!
Congratulations to Dorothy Herrman! Her presentation titled, “Improving aqueous stability of sorghum 3 deoxyanthocyanin pigments for food colorant application” was chosen as one of the six finalists who will advance to the next round of the 2014 AACCI Best Student Research Paper Competition. The competition will take place on Tuesday, October 7 from 8:30 - 11:00 am (subject to change) during the AACCI Annual Meeting in Providence, Rhode Island, USA. Winners of the competition will be announced at the Closing Session and Farewell Reception on October 8.

Congratulations to Brandon Gerrish who was selected for the National Student Recognition Award by the Crop Science Society of America, Soil Science Society of America, and the American Society of Agronomy. Brandon is a senior in the Soil and Crop Sciences department and received the award based on his exemplary scholarship, leadership and involvement.

Aggie Turf Club Update
The Aggie Turf Club is currently served by Bruce Vento (President), Michael Healey (Treasurer), Chase Brister, Jacob Doucet, and Jeff Fastow (all 3 student officers). We have about 15 active attendees and meet every other Wednesday at 5 pm in Heep. The club was represented this past January at the Sports Turf Managers Assn. (STMA) meeting in San Antonio, where the students placed 7th out of 30 teams.

The club also attended the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) meeting in Orlando in February, where they placed 16th out of 75 teams. Recently, Aggie Turf Club served the community through Big Event, and laid a paver walkway for a family in Bryan.

We’ve had some great guest speakers this semester, including Brian Cloud (GCSAA South Central Field Staff), Dan Bergstrom (Director of Field Operations with Houston Astros), Nick McKenna (Field Manager at Olsen Field- PHOTO ATTACHED), Seth Flowers (Service Solutions), and Carter Hindes (Texas A&M Golf Course).

The students are planning on taking an active role in the September South Texas GCSAA Meeting and golf tournament, which will be held in College Station this year.

We continue to have an abundance of internship and job requests for our students. Turf students are looking forward to the end of the semester and embarking on these summer internships, many of which will take them to other states, including Maryland, California, and Arkansas.

We look forward to hearing back about their experiences.
Congratulations!

We are incredibly proud of our 2013-2014 Soils Judging Team! They placed 4th in the group competition and 14th overall at the National Soils Judging Competition in Doylestown, Pennsylvania. Whoop!

Pictured from left to right: Alex “Sergio” Garcia, Berry Isensee, Brandi Trost, Landon Lancaster
Soil and Crop Sciences Faculty and Students Teach Younger Generation About Soil Science

Dr. Cristine Morgan and students in the Hydropedology research program, hosted the annual Future Farmers of America FFA Land Judging and Homesite Evaluation Workshop on March 29th.

150 high school students and nine 4-H participants were eager to learn about soils early Saturday morning. Each team, along with their coaches, rotated between four sites evaluating the soil and making interpretations for the best land usage and management. Teams were able to discuss among themselves and understand why certain decisions were made.

At each of the sites members from the TAMU Collegiate Soil Judging Team – and graduate students in the department of Soil and Crop Sciences – were available to answer any questions. The volunteers also helped students who had questions about texturing soil.

This year, K-12 outreach was included in the workshop. Young students were taught about soil structure and how to texture soil. Graduate students demonstrated soil profiles, soil pits, and current technology in soil science.

Master’s student Gregory Rouze gave short presentations on how a passive gamma ray spectrometer can be used to map soils across fields. Rouze displayed maps and showed the variability of the soils on each map. He then correlated the variability for the students.

Doctoral student Jason Ackerson gave presentations on the use of the visible near infrared (VisNIR) spectroscopy to characterize soil. Ackerson demonstrated the current method of characterizing soils by taking a soil core, and then demonstrated how to use the VisNIR spectrometer to rapidly characterize soils.

At the end of the workshop students left with knowledge of the current technology used in soil science. Among the group there were aspiring pedologists who were ecstatic to glimpse the technology they will use in their future soil science careers.